

## FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT STORY OF LAZARUS 2014

1. Gospel story of death and raising up of Lazarus is an amazing story
  - a. Jesus is told his friend, Lazarus, is dying
  - b. He delays two days, then says to disciples we are going to Judea
  - c. Disciples say, wait a minute, they were just trying to stone you to death there, You want to return
    - i. Jesus says I must go, Lazarus is asleep, good must be improving
  - d. When He goes up to Bethany Martha and Mary are upset with Jesus
    - i. If you had been here brother, would not have died, why did you not heal him
    - ii. Twice Jesus weeps at the tomb, such that he bystanders are struck with his love for Lazarus
2. Jesus raises question to Martha do you believe that he will rise, she answers yes at end of time
  - a. Jesus says: I am the Resurrection and the Life, who believes in me will live even if dies
  - b. As sign of what he means, Jesus calls Lazarus back to life
  - c. Might wonder what is the point, Lazarus will die again
    - i. Jesus is trying to teach He has a larger purpose
    - ii. He is not just a magical physician to friends or those who see him
  - d. He is the resurrection and life itself, He is the power and the glory of God
    - i. In Jesus God is breaking into the world and changing everything, offering us hope
3. Easy to get discouraged, look at world see wars all around us
  - a. People around us, even members of our family seem to have lost their faith
    - i. sin and selfishness are powerful forces in the world
    - ii. Presence of drugs, alcohol abuse, violence tell us how powerful evil is
    - iii. Because of fear and feelings of powerlessness we participate in systems that are destructive to many vulnerable people
  - b. we want to be good and holy people, yet we know we fail in many ways
    - i. Our experiences of fear & powerlessness are really experiences of death and emptiness
    - ii. What Israel felt like when nation was destroyed and many of people, especially leaders were led off into exile if not executed
4. Prophet Ezekiel speaks words of hope to Israel in first reading
  - a. I will have you rise out of your graves O Israel, you will experience life again
  - b. Poetic language say many things, you will be a people again, you will feel alive, have purpose and meaning in your lives
5. Jesus in raising Lazarus gives us symbols or signs of hope
  - a. If Jesus has power to bring to life a man who has been in grave for four days, surely He is doing work of God and his words must be taken seriously

- b. Raising of Lazarus points to the great work Jesus will do
  - i. Realizing Jesus is fully God but also fully human, in his humanity he is taking a great risk
  - ii. He is going to willingly allow himself to be tortured and crucified
  - iii. He trusts that God will fulfill his hope, even as he and his movement looks like a failure
- 6. our belief is that God did intervene by raising Jesus after 3 days
  - a. As a result Jesus promises that He will reach down into our graves and pull us out of them into new life
  - b. Not waiting for our physical death
  - c. He is willing to raise us from discouragement, from sinful failures, from emotional and spiritual death
  - d. Ultimately he will raise us from physical death as well, Asks that we believe that He can and will do this
- 7. In the sacraments we are invited to join Jesus as He moves from death to life
  - a. Every sacrament changes us, Jesus comes into our life to make us a new person
  - b. For the sacraments to change us we have to take a risk, we have to believe that Jesus is raising us to life
  - c. Our faith has to be like that of Jesus where we believe even in midst of darkness
  - d. Other risk is accepting God has his own ways of bringing us to life
  - e. Jesus proclaimed opening words of Psalm 22, My God, My God why have you forsaken me
  - f. At first sounds like despair where are you God, Psalm ends with confident hope
  - g. In same way as we struggle with our moments of discouragement, we accept that first instinct is doubt
  - h. Where is God, does he care? But as we continue to trust, we can be confident that God will surprise us
  - i. He will give us new life, perhaps not in ways we might expect or ask for, but like the resurrection it will be greater than anything we can imagine.